

Meeting Summary

Gulf of Mexico Program Policy Review Board New Orleans, LA

October 5, 2006

ROLL CALL

Organization	Policy Review Board Members	Present	Absent
EPA	Jimmy Palmer (Federal Co-Chair)	X	
Louisiana	Karen Gautreaux (State Co-Chair) Alternate	X	
Alabama	Phil Hinesley (Alternate)	X	
Florida	Bob Ballard	X	
Mississippi	Jerry Cain	X	
Texas	Bruce Moulton (Alternate)	X	
HHS (FDA)	Donald Kramer	X	
DOC	Becky Allee	X	
USDA	Delmer Stamps (Alternate)	X	
DOI	Columbus Brown (Alternate)	X	
DHS	Vacant		
DOD	Mark Boensel (USN)	X	
NASA	Ed Johnson	X	
CAC	Paul Maclean	X	
CAC	Robert Crowe	X	
BAC	Mike Lyons	X	
GRN	Cynthia Sarthou	X	
CSCA	Paul Sugg (Alternate)	X	
AFBF-GC	Ron Anderson		X
DOE	Vacant		

1. **Roll Call - Welcome and Introductions of the Board**

Jimmy Palmer, Federal Co-Chair, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 4, and Mayor Richard Greene, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 6, welcomed the Board and introduced, special guest John Askew, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 7 in Kansas City. Karen Gautreaux, Deputy Secretary of Louisiana DEQ welcomed the Board on behalf of the State Co-Chair, Dr. Mike McDaniel, Secretary LA DEQ.

2. **Overview of Meeting Agenda & Objectives/Status Review of Follow-Up Action Items**

Bryon Griffith, Director of the Gulf of Mexico Program Office, reviewed completion of Action Items from the previous meeting in August 2005. Jimmy Palmer will follow-up with USET regarding their request for membership. There was no response to information sent regarding the process for membership. GMP is requesting partnership with SARP, and Bryon Griffith will attend the Steering Committee meetings.

3. **Gulf Hypoxia – Status of the Action Plan Reassessment**

Darrell Brown, EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds, presented a Hypoxia Task Force update: Steady progress is being made on the Action Plan reassessment. The major points are: Reassessment is underway and concludes next Fall; The Task Force is meeting regularly and will have lead voice in new Action Plan; No big changes in science but lots more information; Upper MARB States question the need for significant action; Gulf States need to be heard. The Goals of the Action Plan are: **Coastal Goal:** Reduce zone to less than 5,000 sq. kilometers; **Within Basin Goal:** Implement actions to restore & protect the waters of the Basin; **Quality of Life Goal:** Improve communities and economic conditions in Basin. An Upper Mississippi River Sub-basin Workshop, a Gulf Science Symposium, and a Lower Mississippi River Sub-basin Workshop were held. The Reassessment Process is to be completed by October 2007 to be presented at the National Task Force Meeting in the fall of 2007.

4. **The President's Ocean Action Plan Implementation Update-- Status in the Gulf of Mexico Region - Gulf States Governors Alliance Update – Leadership in Transition**
- Stephanie Bailenson (FDEP) presented background on the formation of the Gulf Alliance and the issues areas. The partnership of the Alliance will decrease costs and improve effectiveness by working together. Bill Walker (MSDMR) announced that Governor Haley Barbour will assume the State Lead for the Alliance from Governor Bush of Florida. A long-range plan will be developed so there will be a structure to be recognized by Congress and to provide for leadership changes. The Alliance is a State initiative and the States need to request that Congress appropriate funding to the Federal agencies for the Gulf States. The Gulf of Mexico is not getting the attention of other geographic areas. The Alliance needs to move forward to the next level and determine the real priorities to make a Regional difference and help the States. The successes need to be

identified in the individual states and regionally. A framework will be developed for what can be accomplished in 3-5 years and 25 years. Governor Barbour will host a meeting of the governors and the ICOSRMI in the spring or summer timeframe of 2007.

5. **Federal Support Framework – 6 mo. Accomplishments Report**

Bryon Griffith (EPA) and Becky Allee (NOAA) reported on the progress made since the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Governors' Action Plan was released in March 2006. Sixty percent of the 73 actions have already been completed or are on track just six months into the Plan. Actions of particular note are the harmful algal blooms observing system Veracruz, Mexico, pilot project and the Coastal Environmental Learning Centers with upcoming designations in Veracruz and in Mississippi.

6. **FY06 Program Accomplishments Report**

Gloria Car, Gulf of Mexico Program Office, reported the Gulf Program's accomplishments for FY06:

- Supported highly leveraged projects designed to bring assistance to the restoration of targeted Segments/Waterbodies.
- 72 Impaired Segments have been delisted from the baseline 303(d) listings in the priority areas.
- Completed Phase I of Multi-state nutrient characterization of estuarine ecosystems in Northern Gulf as related to concentrations and loadings.
- Phase II actions have been identified and prioritized. 8 waterbodies selected for additional analysis for nutrient load-response characteristics. Areas will be selected for proposed approaches to the development of site specific nutrient criteria. Nutrient Reduction Team at the Gulf Alliance Meeting, July 2006, voted to expand the Northern Gulf Nutrient Pilot Study to Florida and Texas.
- Continued support for Louisiana Exotic Invasive Species Symposium in support of Louisiana Aquatic Species Management Plan. The Symposium is scheduled for December 2006.
- GMP Workplan priorities are incorporated into the Coastal America business model/assessment to better apply the capacity and support in the implementation of GMP projects.
- Microbial Source Tracking (MST) initiative through University of Southern Mississippi is expanding the Regional MST technologies and improved methods development and validation to assist state agencies with ability to define contamination source. Recently, a novel non library based MST method to detect human fecal pollution has been developed. A website has been created – www.usm.edu/bst. Workshop is planned for December 5-6, 2006 in Biloxi, MS.
- Broadened regional and national consumer outreach and education on vibrio vulnificus threats to “high risk” consumers. Initiated process to collect standardized information for each Vibrio vulnificus illness and for tracking products implicated in illnesses.
- Post harvest vibrio treatment capacity requirement has been met, and the reduction in illness rate reported this past year represents a 71% reduction from the baseline for the states of LA, FL, TX, and CA.

- Completed 1st collaborative (EPA/NOAA-NMFS) survey of mercury concentrations in Gulf marine and estuarine fish. Analyses of selected subsamples for methylmercury is underway. With assistance from the Gulf Program, both FL and MS have implemented programs to monitor estuarine and marine fish for mercury.
- Gulf Mercury Database: Update is nearing completion and will be Web Accessible
- Completed Draft Business Plan Strategy for the regional GCOOS program – Gulf Coastal Ocean Observing System. Initial discussions have begun for the development of an Integrated Monitoring and Data Plan for Gulf Region.
- Received funding through EPA's Advanced Monitoring Initiative to expand the binational red tide monitoring system framework (a.k.a., Harmful Algal Blooms Observing System (HABSOS)) to Veracruz.
- Initiated Gulf eutrophication monitoring and modeling program advancements. A draft Gulf of Mexico Modeling Research Plan and Quality Assurance Project Plan have been completed and collaborative efforts are ongoing to solidify partner roles and commitments.
- Jointly supported integration of the agricultural producer leadership in the quest to achieve voluntary incentive-based nutrient reductions in the Mississippi River Basin.
Grant awarded July 7, 2006, to Conservation Technology Information Center to actively involve stakeholders and focus on the reduction of nutrient loads to the Mississippi River and its tributaries through innovative partnerships for developing locally-led non-point source nutrient management solutions in the sub-basins of the Mississippi River.
- 462 acres restored, enhanced, or protected; 16,458 achieved toward 2009 goal of 20,000

7. **White House (CEQ) – Assessment of Progress and Near-term Priorities**

Gerhard Kuska (CEQ) expressed appreciation and thanks from CEQ Chairman Connaughton for all the work of the Alliance and Gulf Program. The Gulf of Mexico is a model for regional governance and has made really good progress in response to the Ocean Action Plan. The Action Plan set a model which the Gulf of Mexico grabbed onto. How do we sustain the momentum and move forward? It's a challenge, and sometimes more time is spent on the process and not enough on the problem. It is important to have issues that address all partners and important that Washington sees the leadership and collaboration. Structure is important, and needs to be focused as a community. If State, Federal, and local governments work together with common goals and a regional concept, then it is easier for Congress to make an argument for funding.

8. **Review and Endorsement of Proposed FY07 Program Workplan**

- **Proposed Strategic Integration w/ Governors Action Plan**
- **GMP Request for Proposals – re: FY06/07 Implementation Support**

Gloria Car presented a review of the Gulf Program FY07 Workplan and the integration with the Alliance Governors Action Plan. The integration maintains the five objectives and adds only three new subobjectives from the Gulf Alliance.

Objective 1: Restore water & habitat quality	
	Subobjective 1(A): ...actions in 71 impaired coastal segments...
	Subobjective 1(B): ... assist the Gulf States in development of their nutrient criteria and management responses
	Subobjective 1(C) :... develop a coordinated cross-cut budget strategy for GMP's partners
	Subobjective 1(D):.... support coordination of region-wide efforts to establish advanced Bacterial Source Tracking methods and technologies
New	Subobjective 1(E): <i>coordinate and standardize state and federal water quality data collection activities in the Gulf region.</i>
Objective 2: Protect Public Health...contaminated seafood and harmful algal blooms...	
	Subobjective 2(A):.... assist the Gulf States and the ISSC in reducing the rate of shellfish-borne <i>Vibrio vulnificus</i> illnesses
	Subobjective 2(B):.... assist the Gulf States in developing and implementing mercury/methylmercury monitoring & fish consumption advisories
	Subobjective 2(C):....HABs warning system
Objective 3: Marine Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, or Protection	
	Subobjective 3(A):....restore, enhance, or protect 2,400 acres
	Subobjective 3(B):... assist regional coastal wetland restoration efforts.
New	Subobjective 3(C):... <i>identify and assess priority coastal, estuarine, nearshore and offshore Gulf habitats and establish a baseline information and mapping system.</i>
Objective 4: Reduce Nutrient Inputs to coastal ecosystems	
New	Subobjective 4 (A):... <i>During recovery and rebuilding efforts apply innovative practices/ technologies to restore fishing and recreational uses in key coastal watersheds impaired by excessive nutrient inputs.</i>
	Subobjective 4(B):.... support national efforts to reduce the 5-year running average areal extent of Gulf hypoxia
Objective 5: Foster Regional Stewardship and Sense of Community	
	Subobjective 5(A):....achieve improved regional awareness of the value of Gulf resources, key environmental issues, actions
	Subobjective 5(B):.... support the Citizens Advisory Committee efforts to achieve improved regional awareness

Through integration with the Gulf Alliance, the Gulf Program is achieving its partnership goal through a greater collaboration of efforts.

9. **2006 Gulf Guardian Awards Program and Ceremony**

- **Mexican Partnership Award Endorsement (as Proposed @ Gulf Summit)**
- **December 13, 2006 Dinner Ceremony Overview (@ Restore America's**

Estuaries Conference)

Bryon Griffith discussed the 2006 Gulf Guardian Awards and Ceremony:

Received 53 Applications; winners will be announced by Oct. 12th.

-The ceremony is to be held in conjunction with RAE's 3rd National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine and Habitat Restoration the evening of Dec. 13th in New Orleans.

-Gulf of Mexico Foundation and the GMP Business council are seeking support for Travel for some of the winners and sponsorship of the Awards Reception.

- **At the 2005 Gulf Guardian Ceremony the Gladys Porter Zoo and the State of Tamaulipas received the first Bi-National Gulf Guardian award for the Kemp's Ridley Sea Turtle Program. This action was suggested by the Governor of Tamaulipas, Mexico during the State of the Gulf Summit and agreed upon by the EPA Regional offices and the Program.**
- **GMPO is seeking the PRB's endorsement of this new Award Category. This category will recognize an extraordinary action, project, or effort between the U.S. and Mexico that protects, restores and/or enhances the health and productivity of the Gulf of Mexico.**
- **For 2006, we have received three (3) Bi-national applications for excellent projects.**

The Board unanimously endorsed the inclusion of the Mexican Award as an annual award with the Gulf Guardian Program.

10. PRB (a.k.a., Coastal America's Gulf of Mexico Regional Principals Group) Recommendation to Designate the Aquarium of Veracruz as the First Bi-National Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center

Bryon Griffith requested concurrence to send a letter to Coastal America designating the Veracruz, Mexico aquarium as the first Binational Coastal America Coastal Environmental Learning Center. The Board unanimously endorsed the request for the Gulf Program to provide the letter of endorsement to Coastal America.

11. Recommendation to Support J.L. Scott Marine Education Center's Application for Consideration of Becoming a Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center

Bryon Griffith requested concurrence to extend the Program's support to the J.L. Scott Center in their application for Learning Center designation in advance of their physical plant recovery which will take years due to the total destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina. Columbus

Brown (alternate representing DOI's PRB Principal, Sam Hamilton) specifically requested to abstain from the vote to provide support for the J.L. Scott's application. Among the remaining members in attendance there was a unanimous consensus to provide support to J.L. Scott and for the Gulf Program to prepare a letter from the PRB Co-Chairs in support of the Center's application.

12. 2007 State-of-the-Gulf Summit (Tamaulipas, MX)

- **What We Know at This Time and,**
- **Proposed Level of Program Involvement**

The Summit is planned for June 2007. Bryon Griffith requested of the Board if the Alliance would want to sponsor a track. The Board unanimously endorsed pursuing a track at the Summit.

13. Citizens Advisory Committee Report

Robert Crowe, CAC Chair, reported that the membership is almost complete. Jean Westbrook, longtime member, is resigning and moving to North Carolina. The CAC is now a strong group and is very pleased to support the Gulf Alliance. The next CAC meeting will be held in late October in Waco, Texas.

ATTACHMENT A

**Follow-up Action Item Summary
Policy Review Board Meeting**

October 5, 2006

ACTION REQUESTED	LEAD(s):	STATUS:
Letter to SARP requesting membership	Bryon Griffith	Completed – Membership Paid and Program has attended Steering Committee and Workgroup Meetings
Letters of endorsement to Coastal America for designation of Veracruz Aquarium and J.L. Scott Marine Center	Bryon Griffith	Completed



Policy Review Board Meeting

October 5, 2006

Omni Royal Orleans Hotel
New Orleans, LA

- FINAL AGENDA -

8:30am

Welcome and Introductions

Jimmy Palmer, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 4, Atlanta

Richard Greene, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 6, Dallas

Karen Gautreaux, Deputy Secretary, LA Department of Env. Quality

- Introduction of Special Guest: *John Askew*, EPA Regional Administrator, Region 7, Kansas City

8:45am

Overview of Meeting Agenda & Objectives

Status Review of Follow-up Action Items

Bryon Griffith, Gulf of Mexico Program Office

Program Implementation Updates

9:00am

Gulf Hypoxia – Status of the Action Plan Reassessment

Darrell Brown, EPA Office of Wetlands, Oceans and Watersheds

9:30am

The President's Ocean Action Plan Implementation Update

-- Status in the Gulf of Mexico Region

- Gulf States Governors Alliance Update – Leadership in Transition

Stephanie Bailenson (FDEP) & Bill Walker (MSDMR)

10:00am

-- Federal Support Framework – 6 mo. Accomplishments Report

Bryon Griffith (EPA) and Becky Allee (NOAA)

10:30am

----- Break -----

10:45am

FY06 Program Accomplishments Report

Gloria Car, GMPO

11:15am

White House (CEQ) – Assessment of Progress and Near-term Priorities

Gerhard Kuska (CEQ)

11:45pm

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Decisional Priorities

- 1:00pm** **Review and Endorsement of Proposed FY07 Program Workplan**
- **Proposed Strategic Integration w/ Governors Action Plan**
- **GMP Request for Proposals – re: FY06/07 Implementation Support**
Gloria Car
- 1:30pm** **2006 Gulf Guardian Awards Program and Ceremony**
■ **Mexican Partnership Award Endorsement (as Proposed @ Gulf Summit)**
■ **December 13, 2006 Dinner Ceremony Overview (@ Restore America’s Estuaries Conference)**
Diane Altsman
- 2:00pm** **PRB (a.k.a., Coastal America’s Gulf of Mexico Regional Principals Group)**
Recommendation to Designate the Aquarium of Veracruz as the First Bi-National Coastal Ecosystem Learning Center
Bryon Griffith
- 2:30pm** **2007 State-of-the-Gulf Summit (Tamaulipas, MX)**
- **What We Know at This Time and,**
- **Proposed Level of Program Involvement**
Bryon Griffith
- Post Katrina and Rita Seafood Contaminant Analyses**
- **Concurrence to Publish Analyses**
Fred Kopfler
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- 2:45pm** **Citizens Advisory Committee Report**
Robert Crowe & Paul Maclean
- 3:00pm** **Board/Committee Roundtable Discussion**
Jimmy Palmer & Karen Gautreaux
- 3:15pm** **Wrap-up / Next Steps**
Bryon Griffith
-
- 3:30pm** **Adjourn**
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